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news from assemblyman **JOSÉ RIVERA**

78TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- **ASSEMBLYMAN JOSE RIVERA AND NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATORS CALL ON THE NEW YORK CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO SUPPORT HISPANIC ORGANIZATION'S CALL TO WITHHOLD FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM PBS**

New York, New York, April 18, 2007 – Assemblyman Jose Rivera and (a group of Puerto Rican/Latino legislators) expressed “profound disappointment and dismay” with the Public Broadcasting System’s (PBS) response to requests from Latino veterans’ organizations, civil rights groups and community leaders to include portrayals of the Hispanic American War effort in the epic World War II documentary, “The War.”

They called on the New York Congressional delegation to support the Hispanic organizations call to withhold federal funding from PBS until this matter is fully investigated.

Latino leaders and organizations have raised concerns with Public Broadcasting executives and documentary producer Ken Burns that Burn’s 14 hour television production scheduled to run this fall on PBS stations had virtually excluded mention of Hispanic American contributions to the war effort.

The Legislators told PBS CEO Paula Kerger in a letter that PBS’ promises to produce interstitial content to run during station breaks were “unacceptable” and no substitute for including recognition of Hispanic contributions in the body of the documentary. “In a production of this length, cost and profile, there is no excuse for giving the sacrifice for this country of our parents, grandparents and relatives short shrift.” Consider in particular, Puerto Ricans who were made U.S. citizens in 1917 to fight in World War I. Since then, Puerto Ricans have patriotically fought in every American conflict. They have done so bravely, gallantly and with unwavering commitment. From 1940 to 1946, more than 65,000 Puerto Ricans served in the American military, most of them going overseas. The 295th and 296th Infantry Regiments of the Puerto Rican National Guard participated in the Pacific theater, while other Puerto Rican soldiers served in Europe.

The Puerto Rico islands of Vieques and Culebra were also used to support the WW II effort and to this day they are paying suffering the health consequences long after the Navy stopped its training bombardments of the island.

The controversy is highly charged, in part because previous Burns/PBS productions on Baseball and Jazz, failed to recognize areas of significant Latino influence and success.

PBS and the stations which make up public television represent a powerful, consolidated media empire. For documentaries, it is a marketing powerhouse. This matter is of critical concern because this production will likely become the de facto video history of World War II. It will be available for years, if not decades on TV, in libraries, homes and classrooms.

“In this season of deep reflection the way media treats minorities, it would be a mistake to underestimate the hurt a sin of omission can cause a community. An act of omission, especially when deliberately and stubbornly perpetuated by a trusted media institution may do more lasting harm than an outrageous and properly vilified remark of a radio shock jock,” the legislators wrote.



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Task Force on Food,
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Black & Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian
Legislative Caucus
Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force

April 24, 2007

Paula Kerger
President and Chief Executive Office
The Public Broadcasting System
2100 Cristal Drive
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Ms. Kerger:

It is with profound disappointment and dismay that we write to express our dissatisfaction with the Public Broadcasting System's (PBS) response to the earnest pleas of Latino veterans' organizations, civil rights groups and community leaders that Hispanic American experience be included in the epic 14-hour World War II documentary, "The War." The continuous flip-flop responses of your network and Ken Burns, the documentary producer are simply unacceptable.

We had hoped that as the leader of the nation's taxpayer supported educational television network, you would embrace your core educational mission. To first ignore and then relegate to an afterthought, the contributions of more than a half million Latino GIs who fought and died in Europe, North Africa and Asia and of our families who supported the war effort on the home front represents a stunning failure to educate.

When PBS, agencies of the federal government and State governments put their resources behind an expansive project like the "The War," it not only assumes a special place in our culture and an enduring part of the historic video record; it displaces other efforts to cover the topic. Like other PBS productions, "The War" will be widely aired, distributed, marketed and made available in libraries, classrooms and stores. Because so much has been invested and the project is so expansive in length, it is unlikely if PBS, and/or the National Endowments will soon finance a new World War II production on this scale.

In a production of this length, cost and profile, there is no excuse for giving the sacrifice for this country of our parents, grandparents and relatives short shrift. Consider in particular, GIs from Puerto Rico. In 1917, without their consent islanders were made

U.S. citizens. Since then, Puerto Ricans have patriotically fought in every American conflict. They have done so bravely, gallantly and with unwavering commitment. From 1940 to 1946, more than 65,000 Puerto Ricans served in the American military, most of them going overseas. The 295th and 296th Infantry Regiments of the Puerto Rican National Guard participated in the Pacific theater, while other Puerto Rican soldiers served in Europe.

The Puerto Rico islands of Vieques and Culebra were also used to support the WW II effort and to this day they are paying a steep price and suffering the health consequences of the military training there, long after the Navy stopped its training bombardments of the island.

Sadly, for some of us, PBS's position on documenting the contributions of Latinos to the U.S. war effort is not a surprise. Over the years Channel 13, your New York flagship station has consistently ignored and shown arrogance to our community.

While Mr. Ken Burns has every right to his artistic vision, PBS can not hide from its own separate responsibilities to taxpayers and the public. Over the years, taxpayers have invested hundreds of millions of tax dollars in public broadcasting and PBS and other government agencies have invested millions of dollars in the productions and brand of Ken Burns.

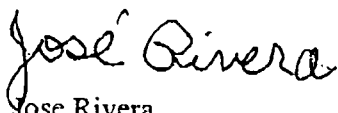
As long time supporters of public broadcasting we are troubled by what appears to be a pattern with similar Ken Burns PBS projects. Two other long form documentaries, namely, "Baseball" and "Jazz," also overlooked significant Latino contributions to the subject matter.

This controversy highlights the need for legislators in New York City, Albany and Washington, DC to very seriously consider our pattern of funding educational television. It also highlights the urgent need to nurture alternative educational television networks, producers and programmers which authentically come from and serves our community.


In this season of deep national reflection on the way media entities treat minorities, it would be a mistake to underestimate the deep hurt a sin of omission can cause. An act of omission, especially when deliberately and stubbornly perpetuated by a trusted media institution may do more lasting harm than an outrageous and properly vilified remark of a single radio shock jock.

We respectfully, but firmly urge you to reconsider your decision.

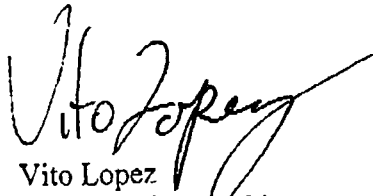
Sincerely,



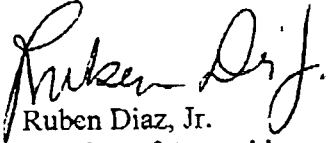
Jose Rivera
Member of Assembly
78th A.D.



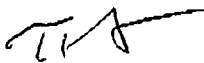
Peter M. Rivera
Member of Assembly
76th A.D.



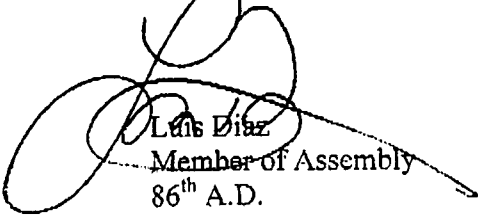
Vito Lopez
Member of Assembly
53rd A.D.



Ruben Diaz, Jr.
Member of Assembly
85th A.D.



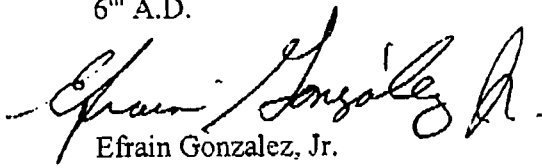
Felix Ortiz
Member of Assembly
51st A.D.



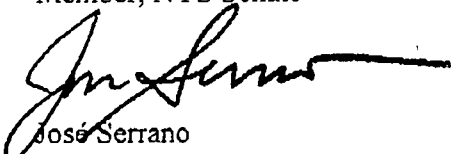
Luis Diaz
Member of Assembly
86th A.D.



Philip R. Ramos
Member of Assembly
6th A.D.

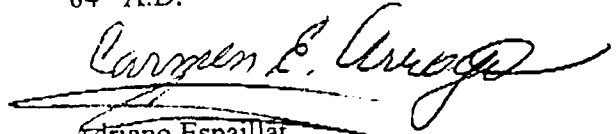


Efrain Gonzalez, Jr.
Member, NYS Senate

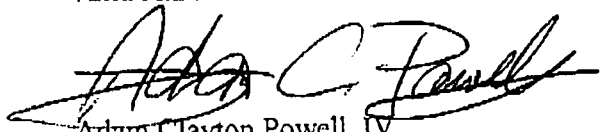


Jose Serrano
Member, NYS Senate

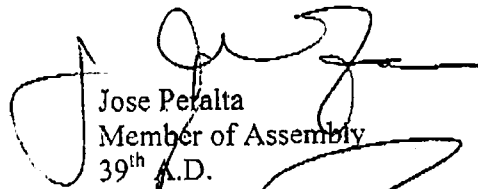
Carmen Arroyo
Member of Assembly
84th A.D.



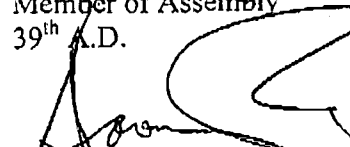
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Assembly
72nd A.D.



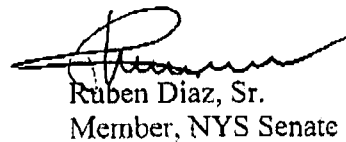
Adam Clayton Powell, IV
Member of Assembly
68th A.D.



Jose Peralta
Member of Assembly
39th A.D.



Naomi Rivera
Member of Assembly
80th A.D.



Ruben Diaz, Sr.
Member, NYS Senate

Martin Malave Dilan
Member, NYS Senate